

## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1        1. A method for facilitating participation in a slot game, comprising:  
2                presenting a mechanical reel configuration comprising a plurality of active reel  
3 segments;  
4                presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments;  
5                deactivating the active reel segments that are associated with a discontinue  
6 symbol; and

7                repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active reel segments, and  
8 deactivating the active reel segments associated with the discontinue symbols, until a  
9 predetermined number of the active reel segments have been deactivated.

1        2. The method as in Claim 1, wherein presenting a mechanical reel configuration  
2 comprising a plurality of active reel segments comprises presenting the active reel segments  
3 in a bonus mode of play in response to presentation of a symbol combination during a  
4 standard mode of play that invokes the bonus mode of play.

1        3. The method as in Claim 2, wherein a bonus symbol set comprising the  
2 symbols presented in each of the active reel segments during the bonus mode of play is  
3 different than a standard symbol set comprising standard symbols presented in the  
4 mechanical reel configuration during the standard mode of play.

1        4. The method as in Claim 1, further comprising at least partially randomly  
2 selecting which symbol is to be presented in each of the active reel segments.

1        5. The method as in Claim 4, wherein at least partially randomly selecting which  
2 symbol is to be presented comprises associating a reel strip having a predetermined symbol  
3 set to each of the active reel segments.

1        6. The method as in Claim 5, wherein associating a reel strip having a  
2 predetermined symbol set to each of the active reel segments comprises associating a  
3 different reel strip to each of the active reel segments.

1        7.     The method as in Claim 4, wherein at least partially randomly selecting which  
2 symbol is to be presented comprises associating a predetermined symbol set to each of the  
3 active reel segments.

1        8.     The method as in Claim 4, wherein at least partially randomly selecting which  
2 symbol is to be presented comprises associating a predetermined symbol set to a plurality of  
3 the active reel segments.

1        9.     The method as in Claim 1, wherein the active reel segments that are  
2 deactivated by being associated with a discontinue symbol are de-emphasized to be  
3 distinguished from the active reel segments.

1        10.    The method as in Claim 9, further comprising retaining the discontinue  
2 symbol in each of the active reel segments that are deactivated, thereby distinguishing the  
3 deactivated reel segments from the active reel segments.

1        11.    The method as in Claim 1, wherein presenting symbols in each of the active  
2 reel segments comprises presenting continue symbols in one or more of the active reel  
3 segments, wherein the continue symbols direct its respective one of the active reel segments  
4 to remain active.

1        12.    The method as in Claim 11, further comprising associating a credit award with  
2 one or more of the continue symbols.

1        13.    The method as in Claim 12, wherein associating a credit award comprises  
2 associating a positive credit award having an additive effect on an accumulated credit total.

1        14.    The method as in Claim 12, wherein associating a credit award comprises  
2 associating a null credit award having no positive or negative effect on an accumulated credit  
3 total.

1        15.     The method as in Claim 12, wherein associating a credit award comprises  
2     associating a negative credit award having a subtractive effect on an accumulated credit total.

1        16.     The method as in Claim 1, further comprising associating a credit award with  
2     one or more of the discontinue symbols.

1        17.     The method as in Claim 17, wherein associating a credit award comprises  
2     associating a positive credit award having an additive effect on an accumulated credit total.

1        18.     The method as in Claim 16, wherein associating a credit award comprises  
2     associating a null credit award having no positive or negative effect on an accumulated credit  
3     total.

1        19.     The method as in Claim 16, wherein associating a credit award comprises  
2     associating a negative credit award having a subtractive effect on an accumulated credit total.

1        20.     The method as in Claim 1, further comprising deactivating a predetermined  
2     plurality of the active display segments in response to deactivation of one of the active reel  
3     segments that is associated with a discontinue symbol.

1        21.     The method as in Claim 1, wherein repeatedly presenting symbols comprises  
2     automatically repeating presenting symbols and deactivating the active reel segments until all  
3     of the active reel segments have been deactivated.

1        22.     The method as in Claim 1, wherein repeatedly presenting symbols comprises  
2     providing a user interface to allow a participant to initiate each repeated presentation of  
3     symbols until all of the active reel segments have been deactivated.

1        23.     The method as in Claim 1, wherein repeatedly presenting symbols and  
2     deactivating the active reel segments until a predetermined number of the active reel  
3     segments have been deactivated comprises deactivating the active reel segments until all of  
4     the active reel segments have been deactivated.

1        24. A casino gaming apparatus hosting a gaming activity having at least a standard  
2 mode of operation and a bonus mode of operation, the casino gaming apparatus comprising:

3              a video screen to present a display grid having a plurality of display cells;  
4              a user interface to facilitate player participation in at least the standard mode  
5 of operation; and

6              a processor configured to identify a predetermined symbol combination  
7 occurring on the display grid during the standard mode of operation to activate the bonus  
8 mode of operation, and during the bonus mode of operation to randomly present symbols via  
9 a physical reel configuration which includes one or more reels having corresponding reel  
10 strips, to deactivate the reels presenting a discontinue symbol, and to repeat the random  
11 presentation of symbols and deactivation of the reels associated with the discontinue symbols  
12 until a predetermined number of the reels have been deactivated.

1        25. The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, wherein the processor comprises  
2 a random number generator configured to randomly select the symbols for presentation via  
3 the reels.

1        26. The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, wherein the user interface  
2 comprises a user interface mechanism to allow the player to initiate each repetition of the  
3 random presentation of symbols.

1        27. The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, further comprising a bonus  
2 payout bar to present payout subtotals for each of the reels associated with the bonus mode of  
3 operation.

1        28. The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, wherein the processor is further  
2 configured to automatically repeat the random presentation of symbols and deactivation of  
3 the reels associated with the discontinue symbols until all of the active display cells have  
4 been deactivated without player intervention.

1        29.     The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, wherein the casino gaming  
2     apparatus comprises a slot machine, and the standard mode of operation of the slot machine  
3     is a slot game.

1        30.     The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, wherein the casino gaming  
2     apparatus comprises a video poker machine, and the standard mode of operation of the video  
3     poker machine is a poker game.

1        31.     The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, wherein the casino gaming  
2     apparatus comprises a video bingo machine, and the standard mode of operation of the video  
3     bingo machine is a bingo game.

1        32.     The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, wherein the casino gaming  
2     apparatus comprises a video keno machine, and the standard mode of operation of the video  
3     keno machine is a keno game.

1        33.     The casino gaming apparatus as in Claim 24, wherein the processor is  
2     configured to repeat the random presentation of symbols and deactivation of the reels  
3     associated with the discontinue symbols until all of the reels have been deactivated.

1        34.     A casino gaming apparatus hosting a gaming activity having at least a standard  
2     mode of operation and a bonus mode of operation, the casino gaming apparatus comprising:  
3                a first reel configuration to display a plurality of display cells;  
4                a user interface to facilitate player participation in at least the standard mode  
5     of operation; and  
6                a processor configured to identify a predetermined symbol combination  
7     occurring on the first reel configuration during the standard mode of operation to activate the  
8     bonus mode of operation, and during the bonus mode of operation to randomly present  
9     symbols via a second reel configuration which includes one or more reels having  
10    corresponding reel strips, to deactivate the reels presenting a discontinue symbol, and to

11 repeat the random presentation of symbols and deactivation of the reels associated with the  
12 discontinue symbols until a predetermined number of the reels have been deactivated.

1           35. A method for facilitating participation in a slot game, comprising:  
2           presenting a display grid comprising a plurality of active display segments;  
3           presenting symbols in each of the active display segments;  
4           deactivating the active display segments that are associated with a discontinue  
5 symbol; and  
6           repeatedly presenting symbols in each of the active display segments, and  
7           deactivating the active display segments associated with the discontinue symbols, until a  
8 predetermined number of the active display segments have been deactivated.